

Masthead Logo

Archives Alive

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Archives Alive! Presentation

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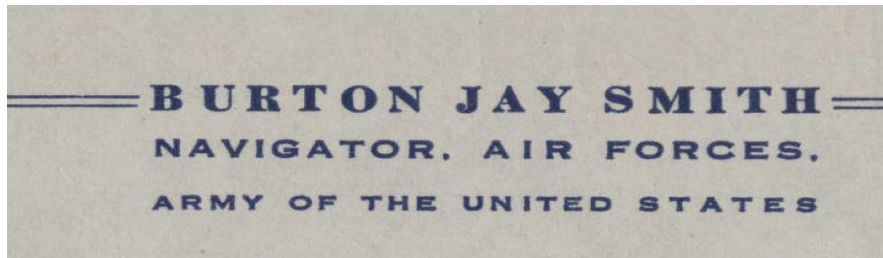
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Rhetorical Analysis

By: Matthew Reckamp

Like most of the letters that were brought to life during World War II, this archive is just a simple “keeping in touch” letter between a possible couple (or at least appears to be one). In this case, the possible couple consists of Burton Jay Smith and Willametta Turnepseed. Burton Jay Smith is the creator of this letter, as well as a soldier for the United States during World War II. As stamped



on the letter, Smith was a Navigator of Air Forces for the Army of the United States.

The meat of the archive is where Smith states that he doesn’t have much time, making this letter a “keeping in touch” letter, as indicated earlier. When classifying this letter as a “keeping in touch” letter, people assume that the letter will be rushed and will contain questions like “How are you?” and statements like “I miss you!” which is usually the case. However, after giving everyone his best regards back in Cleveland, Smith does something that makes you question the purpose of this letter. Smith goes into detail about a very specific topic while straying away from the normal “keeping in touch” nonsense.

The previous letters between Smith and Turnepseed would have been wonderful to help with this, but from what I derived, it seemed that there was somewhat of a debate going on between the couple. Most debates are sparked by something that directly affects both of

the party's lives. When Smith pinpoints two people down to what seems to be their first names, you get the idea that some conflict has arisen that shook the couple. Smith starts off his argument with the classic counter-argument technique, "Even though Clyde's attorney may say that Cole cannot rule out the amendments-". The whole point is to bring Turnepseed's attention to her own argument and follow it with a much more logical statement (Smith's argument). He does this when he says, "he might do it. After all the Executive Judges do have final and supreme power until their acts are reviewed and confirmed or disavowed by a succeeding convention" immediately after his first statement. It seems that Turnepseed might have thought that this so called Clyde's attorney had the ace in the hole, when Smith thinks that Cole will come out in the end. By placing his argument immediately after Turnepseed's argument, Smith further strengthens his with the counter-argument technique, making it seem like the better choice.

When transcribing this letter, I was almost certain that this analysis was not going to be easy due to the lack of rhetorical strategies. However, after a few bathroom breaks and quick naps, the counter-argument technique stuck out like no other.

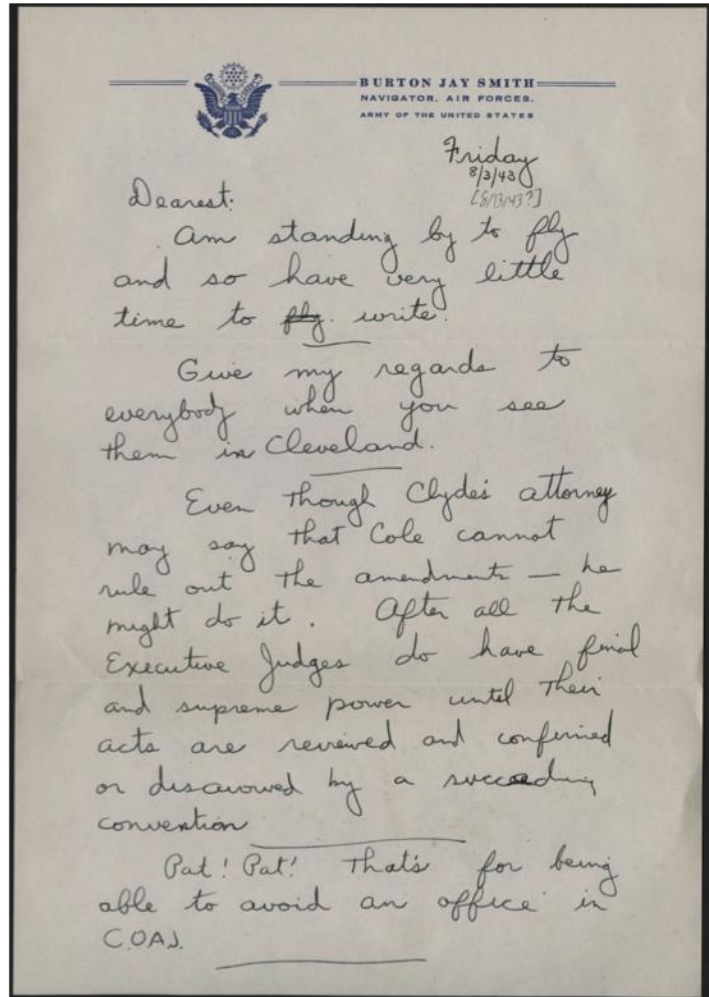
Historical Analysis

Before looking into the context of the actual paper and analyzing the historical things that were referenced, I want to talk about the date this letter was written. When looking up the date, I was shocked to see that Burton Jay Smith wrote the wrong date. Friday, August 3rd, 1943 does not exist, so I am just going to assume Smith attempted to write Friday, August 13th, 1943 because that date exists and I could see how he might have messed that up. So if we use August 13th, then this tone of this letter makes sense. Smith first starts off his letter by saying, "Am standing by to fly and so

have very little time to write.” Around the time of this letter, the Allies were pushing their troops and planes very far into German territories, slowly gaining ground against the Nazis. Since Smith was a Navigator of Air Forces for the Army of the United States, he possibly wrote this letter right before a “push” that I talked about earlier, which is very interesting. After doing some more research, I was able to find out that the Germans were in full retreat after a battle against the Allies in Italy. I wasn’t able

to find out any information leading me to the conclusion that Smith was a part of that, but it is pretty neat that there is a chance.

Later on in the letter, Smith talks about what sounds to be a court case between two people identified as Clyde and Cole. As much as I wanted it to be, there was no major case between two people identified as Clyde and Cole during 1943. As predicted in my rhetorical analysis, it is most likely a case between two people that know Smith and Willametta Turnepseed. I also wanted COAJ to be something very historical as well when I saw it referenced in Smith’s letter, however after further research, it was discovered that it was not anything fancy. Just a law firm type business back home in Ohio for Smith.



References

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